



March 15, 2013

Public Health Committee

John Bailey, Government Relations Director

Comments on SB No. 991: An Act Concerning an Advisory Council on Palliative Care

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, members of the Public Health Committee.

The American Heart Association would like to voice its support for SB No. 991 "An Act Concerning an Advisory Council on Palliative Care".

When heart failure progresses to an advanced stage, difficult decisions must be made. For advanced heart failure patients and their doctors, making good decisions requires teamwork. Through shared decision making, doctors and patients consider both the options and the patient's preferences before charting a treatment course. To guide shared decision making, the American Heart Association recommends considering palliative care, offered alongside medical treatment, to help manage symptoms and assist patients and families with tough decisions.

The goal of palliative care is to help patients live better by relieving symptoms and improving quality of life. Members of the palliative care team may include a doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain, physical therapist, occupational therapist, dietitian and psychologist. Palliative care can provide:

- Relief of pain and symptoms of heart failure;
- Emotional and spiritual support for the patient and the family;
- Help with making complex treatment decisions;
- Assistance with practical issues, such as advance directives or insurance; and,
- Support services for caregivers, such as respite care and grief counseling.

The American Heart Association stands ready to support passage of SB 991 to ensure that patients and families are made aware of these available services and health professionals are equipped and able to address patients' quality of life concerns. All Connecticut residents facing serious illnesses like heart failure should have meaningful access to this more comprehensive model of patient-centered and family-focused concurrent care.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (860) 330-3341 or john.bailey@heart.org if I can provide anything further.